

16458
Israel and England compared, with
respect to the divine favours, and
their own conduct :

I N A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D

On the 4th of Feb. 1740--1.

A T

Long-Ditch, Westminster :

Being the Day appointed for solemn *Fasting*
and *Humiliation*.

Published at the Request of the Hearers.

By S. SAY. *K*

L O N D O N,

Printed for JAMES BRACKSTONE, at the
Globe in Cornhil. M DCC XLI.
(Price Sixpence.)

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THE BRITISH MUSEUM
AND THE
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TO THE
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1871

1871



ISAIAH V. 4.

What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should have brought forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?



N such a day as this I shall not so much as enquire what other sense may be given to any of the words I have now read to you, besides that which offers itself at first sight. They are a parable indeed, but easy to be understood, and a manifest expostulation of God
B with

4 Israel *and* England *compared*.

with a church and people who had enjoy'd the most distinguishing privileges, and had acted in a manner the most unsuitable to them.

THEY are here represented as the *vineyard* of God, a vineyard *in a very fruitful hill* ; which he had *fenced about* ; which he had *planted with the choicest vine* ; had *built a tower in the midst of it* ; had *made a wine-press in it* ; and looked therefore that it *should bring forth grapes*, the noblest and the richest grapes ; and, contrary to all reasonable expectation, *it brought forth wild grapes*, the fruit of a *degenerate plant*, unworthy the stock, and the care of the planter, as he complains in the prophecy of *Jeremiah*, chap. ii. 21.

AND, that there might be no question what was the purport of such a parable, the prophet himself explains it, ver. 7. *The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant ; and he looked for judgment, and behold oppression ; and for righteousness, and behold a cry.*

WHAT we propose then in the choice of such words is this :

I. To consider the case of *Israel*.

II. To enquire how far the parallel may be drawn between such a people and ourselves. And then

III. To

Israel and England compared. 5

III. To make some proper use of it on such an occasion. And,

I. As to the case of *Israel*, with which I am to begin, we may consider them either as a nation, or as a church. And,

I. IF we consider them merely as a nation, even in This respect *they might seem to be a peculiar people to God above all the people of the earth.* He declares in *Deut. xxxii. 8.* that *he had set the bounds of all other nations, according to the number of the children of Israel.* As if in the distribution of the several parts of the habitable earth, he had taken care to leave room and a space for his own *chosen people* according to their numbers. Their situation was in the centre of the then inhabited world. And, as he had transplanted *this vine out of Egypt*, that it might not suffer by the change of the soil, he planted it in *a very fruitful hill; in a land flowing with milk and honey; abounding with corn, and wine, and oil; watered with the dew of heaven, and bless'd with the former and the latter rain; seasons unknown in Egypt.*

AND this his vineyard he had *fenced*, or wall'd, *about*: had enclosed it, as it were, from the rest of the world, and guarded it on every side from any sudden invasion; with vast mountains, and endless deserts to

6 Israel *and* England *compared*.

the east ; a narrow tract of land where it might easiest be entered from the north or the south ; and, with what the scripture calls the *great sea* to the west : And here, if there were, as it must be own'd there were, some lesser communities neighbouring upon them, they were not powerful enough to endanger them in the ordinary state of things ; and, from all enemies that might attempt to invade them from the sea, they were, as one of our own writers justly saith of the States of *Holland* with regard to this nation, a kind of out-guard to them on the continent, and the first that must be attack'd from abroad.

BUT they had a surer guard than all this ; the divine providence and protection, so long as they were faithful to their God, and understood their interest and their duty. For as the Psalmist says in the cxxvth Psalm, *As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people for ever.*

IF they might either fear the surprizes, or the number and force of their enemies ; with regard to the former, he, who *has the hearts of all men in his hands*, assures them, that even when they should leave the borders of their land defenceless, as they were obliged to do three times in the year, *when all the males among them were to appear*, by the command of God, *in the place where he*
should

Israel and England compared. 7

should set his name; no man should so much as DESIRE their land in those times; Exod. xxxiv. 24. And this was a standing miracle among them, as well as a remarkable instance of the power of God even over the hearts of FREE creatures.

AND as to the numbers and force of their enemies, he promises to be present with them in all their conflicts; to lead forth their armies, and fight their battles; and that under his conduct and influence *one of them should chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight*: as we see it verified in the very letter in the account of the worthies of *David*, 2 Sam. xxiii. and in the history of *Jonathan* and his armour-bearer, 1 Sam. xiv. 13---15. compared with ver. 6. while at other times they had nothing to do, but to *stand still and see the salvation of God*: to behold the sea closing upon their enemies, the stars in their courses fighting against them, their swords sheath'd in each others bowels, or the angel of the Lord chasing of them, or slaying them by hundreds of thousands.

HENCE are those exulting expressions of the faith of his people, which we read in the xlvⁱth Psalm, ver. 1, to the end. *The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. Therefore will not we fear, though*

8 *Israel and England compared.*

though the earth be removed, though the mountains be carried into the depth of the sea, &c.

WELL then might he say, he *had built a tower*, who had erected himself as a mighty tower in the midst of this people ; and well might they cry out in the view of such an almighty defence, *The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, the horn of my salvation, and my high tower ;* Psal. xviii. 1.

AND this protection it was always in their power, and at their choice, to enjoy : and, at the same time, to enjoy all the riches and abundance that a land, thus own'd, and bless'd, and guarded of God, could give them. He *would feed them with the finest of the wheat, and with honey out of the rock would he satisfy them.* And, again, *their sons should be as plants grown up in their youth, their daughters as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace. Their garners should be always full, their sheep should bring forth thousands and ten thousands in their sheep walks. Their oxen should be strong for labour, and there should be no breaking in, or forcing out, and no complaining in their streets.* Psal. cxliv.

IT shall come to pass, saith Moses, in Deut. vii. 12. *if ye hearken to these judgments to do them, that the Lord thy God will love thee, and bless thee. He will also*
bless

Israel and England compared. 9

bles the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Thou shalt be blessed above ALL people, there shall not be male or female barren among you, nor among your cattle; and the Lord shall take away from thee all sickness. Exod. xxiii. 25. Thus they should enjoy all that a nation can wish to enjoy, to make it a rich, a powerful, and a happy people.

HAPPY, indeed, is the people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord. Psal. cxliv. 15. cxlvi. 5.

AND this brings me to the

SECOND view in which we may regard them, that is, as a church, as well as a people, to God on the earth; a *holy nation*, as well as a *chosen generation*; in other words, a kingdom of saints: For there was a sense in which it was really true, what was once vainly said, that ^a *all the Lord's people were holy*. A people, I mean, who stood in a covenant-relation to him, and who had all received the seal of such a covenant, and even the *seal of the righteousness of faith* itself, and of all the blessings with which God will bless for both worlds, and bless forever. For he who styles himself the *God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*, and who has said, *This is my*
name

^a Numb. xvi. 3. 1 Cor. vii. 14.

10 Israel *and* England compared.

name FOREVER, *and this is my memorial to all generations.* He is not the God of the dead but of the living. They are therefore still alive to him, and alive to him as his covenant-people, or he would be ashamed to be called their GOD, as the apostle assures us, *Heb. xi. 16.* and this agreeably to the reasonings of our Lord before him. *Luke xx. 37.*

AND he had made abundant provision for the faith and obedience of this people. They received a law from the mouth of God himself. They heard his voice speaking to them, a voice ^b more than human, from *the midst of a mount burning with fire.* And, in all following ages, he continued to speak to them sometimes by himself upon great and urgent occasions, and at all times by a succession of prophets raised up amongst them: and, in all ordinary cases, the *Priests lips* were to keep knowledge, and they had a right to demand *the law from their mouths*, a law that was to be read to them at ^c stated times, and for many ages was read daily in their synagogues. And in the temples they were allowed to enquire of God himself, an advantage so great in the apprehension of *David*, that he looks upon it as the most inestimable privilege in life. *One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house*

^b Deut. v. 22—26. ^c xxxi. 10. Acts xv. 21.

Israel and England compared. 11

dience and gratitude? And how justly might he put the question as he does, *What was there to be done more for my vineyard that I have not done?*

COULD I have done more for them as a people? could I have done more for them as a church?

HAVE they not enjoyed *sufficient*? have they not enjoyed *abundant* means of improvement and fruitfulness? and where lies the fault then if they have not been *effectual*?

THIS is his expostulation concerning them. For the justice of which he refers himself to their own judgment and consciences. *And now, that is, after all this care and culture, and such a disappointment; and now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.*

3. I WILL not go over the history of this people to shew the propriety of such an expostulation with them. Their own priests and prophets, and the authors of their Psalms, have done it. See *Ezra ix. 7.* and more particularly the larger confession in the ixth of *Nebemiab*, with the cvith Psalm, from the beginning to the end. And whence are all the complaints of the prophet before us, and with which his prophecy opens?

12 *Israel and England compared.*

Hear O heavens, and give ear O earth, for the Lord has spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebell'd against me. The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know, my people does not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers. They have provoked the holy one of Israel to anger; they are gone away backward, or alienated from him.

THUS *Jeremiah*, thus *Ezekiel*, and thus indeed all the prophets. They had no reason then to be exasperated, in the manner they were, against holy *Stephen*, when he saith to them, *Acts vii. 51---54. Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, ye and your fathers. See Jer. ix. 26.*

AND even he, who would have been their willing and joyful Saviour, how does he complain of them aloud, and lament over them, *Luke xiii. 34. O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent to thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and YE WOULD NOT!*

AND thus far we have considered the case of *Israel* or the *Jews*.

I

AND

Israel and England compared. 13

house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple. Psal. xxviii. 4. [O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee. My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, to see thy power and thy glory so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Psal. lxiii. For here God himself resided, and after a sort dwelt with them on the earth, and they presented themselves before the Lord. Therefore the Psalmist saith in the 84th Psalm, How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts, my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of my God. Blessed are they that may dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee. Selah.]

THUS he shewed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He had not dealt so with any nation, and as for his judgments they had not known them. Psal. cxlvii. ult.

NOT that God was the God of the Jews only, and, not of the Gentiles, tho' he was indeed their God in a peculiar manner. The great apostle of the Gentiles rejects with indignation so narrow a thought, and so unworthy that God who is no respecter of persons. The temple had its court of the Gentiles, as well as its inner court, and his house was a house of prayer for all people, though some temporary ordinances of it

14 *Israel and England compared.*

were peculiar to the *Jews*. But all this knowledge they enjoy'd not for their own sakes merely, but for the sake of others, that *the law* might one day go forth out of *Zion*, and the word of the Lord from *Jerusalem*, till all flesh shall see the salvation of God. They were therefore only the chosen instruments of the greatest good to the rest of mankind. To preserve the prophecies, and the promises of the coming of him whom the *Samaritans* justly expected as the *Saviour of the world*; and who was to teach all things to all nations.

BUT though some nation must be chosen for such a purpose, and these were not chosen for their own sakes, but with a view to the instruction of all mankind, yet hereby great was their privilege to be chosen thus the first to enjoy the mercy which they were to communicate to all the world. For, when the apostle had made the confession, *He is not the God of the Jews only*, and it was natural to object, *what advantage then hath the Jew? much every way*, saith he, *but chiefly, because to them were committed the oracles of God*. Rom. iii. 1, 2. with ix. 4, 5.

THESE were their privileges, these their advantages, and what then might not be reasonably expected from such a people? what fruits, that is, what returns of obedience

Israel and England compared. 15

people that never heard the name of *Great Britain* are yet the richer and the happier for it.

'TIS the same situation that gives us *peace* oftentimes in our borders, when all the rest of the nations about us are in a general commotion; and which secures us from any sudden attempts and incursions of foreign enemies, to which the borders of neighbouring nations are continually expos'd upon the continent; and especially, while we remain, as hitherto we have generally been, for some ages, masters of the sea; or formidable at least by our naval power, and superior in the number, the skill, and spirit of our mariners.

FOR this reason, since the two nations that inhabit the north and south of this island, have been united under one common head, no invasion from abroad has ever been attempted, or never with success; one only excepted, which we ourselves invited, and even long'd and pray'd for the success of it, as we had the highest reason to do.

AND, by the same advantage, we generally enjoy a *temperature of seasons* both with regard to heat and to cold, which no other people that we know under the whole heaven enjoy, within the same latitude, or under

16 *Israel and England compared.*

der the same climate, either on the continent, or in any of the islands ^a.

THE same clemency of the air is the true reason also of the natural riches of the soil in corn and pasture, added to the secret treasures in the bowels of the earth, in mines of iron, and lead, and tin, from which more ^b authors than one have thought this island derived its name of *Britain*, tho' upon a different account. Mines inexpressibly more valuable in their intrinsic worth than those of *Peru* or both the *Indies*. In the enjoyment of which we possess every thing within ourselves, that is due to the necessities

^a And whether there be centuries, as well as there are sets of years among us, more kindly to human bodies, as well as to the fruits of the earth; or whether it be owing to long collected materials for pestilential fumes, more plentifully exhaling in certain seasons of unusual rains and heats, from earths that have been cover'd for thousands of years with numerous buildings; or to the nature of the buildings themselves; certain it is, that since the last great plague and the universal conflagration of a city more antient than any history of this island, there is hardly any other city in the world where so many of those who die weekly, appear to have liv'd, some much more, and many near a hundred years old; or where the number of those that die yearly for upwards of seventy years together, has hardly once exceeded one fifth or sixth part of their usual proportion.

^b *Cooper in Voce Britannia, and Bochart's Phaleg.*

Israel *and* England compared. 17

AND do we think that they were worse than other nations, and that there was a peculiar stupidity or malignity of nature in this people; and that no other nation under the like enjoyments would have acted with the like ingratitude?

ALAS! *these people were our* ENSAMPLES. Human nature is much the same in all the sons and daughters of apostate *Adam*. *These things* therefore *were written for OUR admonition*, who are generally apt to have better thoughts of ourselves, and are ready to imagine we are not capable of the thousandth part of the evils which we yet do, when placed in circumstances of peculiar temptations.

AND if we are still ready to judge otherwise, let us now compare our own privileges, and our own conduct, with the privileges and behaviour of the *Jews* of old.

AND thus we are come to

II. THE second part of our design, to remember our own advantages, and enquire impartially into our own behaviour; and seriously consider whether the same God may not take up the same complaint against us, and expostulate with us in the same manner. And

First, LET us consider our privileges, or the divine vouchsafements to us, and
this

18 *Israel and England compared.*

this both as a nation and as a church, and first,

1. As a nation. If we reflect in what manner the divine providence has distinguish'd us from most, if not from all the nations of the earth, with regard to our civil privileges, and even our natural advantages themselves.

WHAT a situation do we enjoy ?

WHAT security from hence, as far as any situation on this earth can promise security ?

WHAT healthful seasons ?

WHAT riches and abundance ?

AND above all, what liberty, without which all the rest could little avail us ?

WE inhabit an island, divided from all the rest of the world by the sea ; lying yet between the two worlds, the old and the new, in the most convenient situation for trade and commerce with either, and by such a cement to unite all the nations of the earth into one body, and into one common interest in each other.

AN island, if not the largest, as it has been long esteem'd, yet by far the noblest in all the world, and of the greatest importance to all the rest of mankind, who feel its influence in every nation and corner of the earth ; and many remote and barbarous people

Israel and England compared. 19

necessities or comfort of human life; and go abroad only to add to the luxury or superfluities of it.

BUT the chief blessing of heaven as a civil society is the nature of our constitution; and the liberty secured to us by the great charter and fundamental law of this land; and under the advantages of which we feel ourselves safe in our persons and in all our possessions. *The bodies, it saith, of all Englishmen are free*: The meanest person that has any property among us, holds it with the same security as the greatest; and his person is as sacred, that is, as much under the protection and guard of the law, as the king upon the throne. So that as the *Jews* of old were a *kingdom of priests*, because the tribe of *Levi* were expressly taken for the service of the tabernacle, in the room of the first-born and head of every family in *Israel*, who were therefore represented by them, *Numb. iii. 12, 13. viii. 16, 17.* we may be said, for a like reason, to be a nation of kings; as every law is supposed to be made by the joint concurrence of the whole nation, present at the making of them, and consenting to them, by those who represent them, and are chosen by them. And it must be therefore our own fault if we are not governed according to our own hearts desire. Nor can we suffer

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in

20 *Israel and England compared.*

in any of our valuable rights, but by our own misconduct and folly.

AND as for those who preside in the government and execute the laws, they have the greatest happiness a wise and good man would ever desire; never to be left to the sway of passion, or impotence of power, to do those things which they would certainly repent the moment they had done them, or would have reason to do it. They *judge* only as the law has judg'd before them, and *execute* only what the united wisdom of the whole nation has directed them to put in execution. For which reason 'tis a maxim of our law, that *the king of England can do no wrong*. And to have a power to all good, and no wrong, which is the power of the supreme magistrate among us, this is a situation that angels themselves rejoice to be in, and ^f saints already arriv'd in heaven. Such is the power that our kings possess, and such the rights of our people. Happy if kings and subjects believe themselves to be so, and act in the spirit of the constitution under which they govern and are governed, for the mutual advantage and felicity of both.

Too

^f See the words in which the prince of *Wales* recollects the substance of the chancellor's discourse in that admirable dialogue of *Fortescue de laudibus legum Angliæ*, ch. xiv.

Israel and England compared. 21

Too happy if their happiness they know.

2. BUT this liberty will appear a still greater and more desirable blessing, if we come to consider ourselves not merely as a civil, but as a *christian* society.

THE *law* of *Jesus*, which is but another word for *the law of liberty*, was preach'd very early in this island ; and at a time when we have hardly any certain account of the civil government of it. And when *Rome* first sent her monks to introduce their superstitions here, the island was full of the antient and original christians, who rejected their rites, as well as their authority, and sustain'd a long and dreadful persecution from the new converts.

HERE also, in the depth of popish darkness and tyranny, a light arose in the person of *Wickliff*, that afterwards broke out with greater lustre in *Germany*, and introduced a more general reformation in all the northern kingdoms of christendom. And how much farther we in this nation could have wished, or should have rejoiced to have seen the original christianity restored in the purity and simplicity of it, and especially *in the liberty with which Christ has set us free* ; yet have we abundant reason to

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thank God, that it was carried to such a length as it was; and that all, *who have eyes to see*, may see with their own eyes, and read those sacred and inestimable writings *which are able to make us wise to salvation*. And, whatever it were in any past times or reigns, we ought to acknowledge with utmost gratitude to God, that now, for fifty years and more, we all enjoy the utmost liberty of enquiry and profession; and may know and practise, fully and openly, whatever our hearts desire to know, and our consciences suggest to us to be right to profess and practise as christians.

AND we assemble together from sabbath to sabbath, *and none maketh us afraid*.

AND whether any nation under the whole heaven, enjoys the same liberty in the same extent, may be justly doubted.

FOR wherever a national religion is established by a law, without a liberty to dissent, there the faith and conscience of the public must be the private faith and conscience also; that is, there must be no such thing as faith and conscience thenceforward allowed by any law in such a nation.

TO have the bible then in every hand among us, and to be able to chuse our spiritual guides to instruct or assist our enquiries, and to place ourselves under their instruction

Israel *and* England compared. 23

instruction or admonition, and even under the influences of the divine spirit promis'd to be present with us in the sacred assemblies of christians ; and to do this every sabbath ; and if we please, in this great city, every day of the week, if our leisure permits, or our inclination leads us to do it ; is not this to enjoy all that the great God can properly give us to enjoy for the diffusing of knowledge, or communicating grace to free creatures ?

AND to have this liberty continued and secured to us by a succession of deliverances, repeated so often, from all the attempts of all those who would have introduced among us either civil or religious tyranny ; and this by the most kind, the most seasonable, and the most wonderful interposition of his almighty over-ruling providence ; what obligations does it not lay us under, and what may not God expect from such a people ?

WHEN I consider therefore by what a series, of almost miraculous salvations, God has ever delivered this church and nation, and even from worse than *Egyptian* slavery ; and how from Queen *Elizabeth* down to our days, the winds and the seas have remarkably fought for us, and forbid invasions, or conducted deliverances, when we seem'd to ourselves to stand upon the very brink of
ruin ;

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ruin ; and how, lastly, in the hour of our utmost danger and fears, both for our religious and civil liberties, under a weak or wicked ministry, he peaceably, successfully, and without opposition, contrary to all our expectations a little before, introduced the present illustrious family among us ; and has confirmed so often the prospect of the protestant succession by a numerous offspring, and happy alliances with so many other auspicious families, and particularly in the last marriage of the Prince with the house of *Saxony* ; to whose early and powerful protection of *Luther*, we owe, under God, the great reformation ; and may hope to share with them for ourselves and our posterity, all the blessings promised to the seed of martyrs and confessors to *thousand generations* : I say, when we consider all these things, may I not address myself to you, as *Moses* does to *Israel*, Deut. iv. 4. *The Lord hath taken you, and brought you out of the iron furnace, to be to him a people of inheritance, as at this day.* And again, Deut. xxvi. 18. *The Lord hath avouched thee to be his peculiar people, and to make thee high above all nations, in praise, and in name, and in honour* ; if we, I mean, refuse not the honour and felicity, as once we certainly did, now about thirty years ago, when we seemed by an amazing series of successful sieges and repeated

Israel and England compared. 25

repeated victories, to stand in the strongest point of light and glory of all the nations.

BUT if this should be thought a carrying the parallel too far, yet surely when we reflect upon our invaluable privileges and enjoyments, both as a people and as a church, we ought to acknowledge that he, who has thus *fenced* us about, and guarded us on every side, and who has always appeared *as our high tower in the midst of us*, and made us the objects of his continual care and culture, has the highest reason to say to us as he does to *Israel* of old, *What could I have done more for you that I have not done?* And may he not also as justly add, concerning this his vineyard as concerning that of old, *Wherefore when I expected it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?*

III. AND so I am led on to the more melancholly part of the parallel.

To compare our behaviour, under all these advantages, with that of this ungrateful and unfruitful people.

I. FOR first, if we consider our natural and civil advantages, the health and peace; the riches, and the plenty, which we have enjoyed in so long a succession of years, have we been thankful? have we been fruitful? have we not rather abused such favours, or used them only as the fuel or instru-

26 Israel and England compared.

instruments of lust and luxury? have we not regarded them only as the ready materials for a life of pleasure, and an indulgence to every vice and folly; and exchanged that diligence, and temperance, and application to business, which was the true source of the present riches of the nation, for vanity and shew; for idleness, extravagance, and profuseness of living, the certain indication, as well as cause of the approaching ruin and poverty of any nation?

AND this will appear, with a yet more formidable aspect, if we consider these vices, not merely as the waste of time, and the profusion of wealth; but as they appear in the eyes of a holy God, as SINS, or as CRIMES, and these of a very provoking nature and aggravated guilt; the source of atheism and impiety; when, in the words of the 12th verse of our chapter, it is come to this with any people, that *the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine are in their dwelling, but that they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hand.* For there is nothing that extinguishes more a sense of God, and serious religion, or is more inconsistent with habitual piety, than a perpetual and endless succession of pleasures, which issues soon in an utter forgetfulness of God, or disrelish at least, of the pleasures of religion, and a
stupid

Israel and England compared. 27

stupid inattention to the most instructive and awakening dispensations of his grace or providence.

BUT I intend to be more particular on this head, which is the principal part of the business of such a day.

AND not to look back into former times, I shall call to mind only what has been the deportment of this nation since our last great and glorious deliverance at the happy Revolution. And I shall do it under the three following heads, which respect either,

*The decay of religion,
The growth and spirit of infidelity,
Or the increase of immorality.*

I. AND, as to the *first of these*, those of us who can remember a little more than fifty years backward, as many of us can do, can well remember what were the fears, yea what the terrors and consternation of the minds of all who had any concern for the interest of true religion, or the peace of their own consciences, when they expected that God was going to deprive them of the word and ordinances of religion as deliver'd to us by Jesus Christ and his apostles, and to bring upon us the grossest idolatry, and the greatest corruption of christianity; or at least to subject us to the fiery trial, and

E

put

28 *Israel and England compared.*

put to the severest proof the strength of our faith, and the sincerity of our love to our Lord Jesus Christ. Not long before this, many of the faithful ministers of Christ had been banish'd from the larger resorts of men, had been forced into corners, or drag'd away to pine or perish in prisons, or consign'd over at least to poverty and want: But how much worse was it when all professions and denominations of protestants, those who persecuted, and those who were persecuted by them, were likely to fall under a general, undistinguishing, and more dreadful persecution? And when we expected to suffer, not merely the loss of goods and liberty, but of life itself; if, at least, the peace and salvation of our souls was dearer to us than life itself.

BUT when all *trembled for the ark of God*, and feared for themselves, and for their little ones, and for the whole church of God; and cried alike to the Lord, and to the Saviour whom God had prepared, and raised up as the only probable instrument, under God, to effect a deliverance; and deliverance *was* effected; a deliverance so great, so sudden, so without noise or blood, and for this reason so unexpected, and almost incredible to us, that we were ready to say with the church of the *Jews*, Psal. cxxvi. *When God turned again the captivity of Zion*
we

Israel *and* England compared. 29

we were like them that dream: When it might seem thus to be rather a pleasing vision or *dream* of deliverance, than a real certainty of waking happiness, what yet was the effect of it? how soon did one denomination forget their promises to the other, and the other forget their promises to God, and both return to their former jealousies and animosities, or forget, at least, their former love and zeal in those days of common danger and temptation, when they had no hope but in God, and no comfort but in their constant recourse to him, and union with one another?

'Tis true, there was a present sense of the mercy. *The Lord had done great things for us, whereof we were glad. Then were our mouths fill'd with laughter, and our tongues with singing.* We ran in crowds to the places of our religious assemblies that had been opened to us; and whatever were the design of those that had opened them a little before, open now by the kind providence of God, in such a manner, that they have never been shut against us from that day to this. In this we *have not been straiten'd* in the providence of God, or the laws of the land; but have we not *been straiten'd in our own bowels*? How little desire has there been of sacred enjoyments, or breathing after the most salutary and affecting ordinances of our

30 Israel *and* England *compared*.

religion? and how did we cool by swift degrees, and remit of our former fervor of devotion; and especially as that generation died away who had seen the wonders of the Lord, or experienced the terrors of a state of utmost danger to their most important interests to all eternity? *Another race arose that knew not God*, as the God of their salvation, nor had felt the pain of long absence and frequent banishment from the house of God. And, where there was a visible coldness and indifference towards public worship, 'twas not to be suppos'd that secret religion would long be kept up.

AND, indeed, as such a day as this allows, and even requires me to speak freely; such is the present state of things among us, with those, at least, who live in the great, and politer world, that if any young converts, under a real sense of piety, and a powerful conviction of the necessity of retirement, and the duty of closet-religion, should think of setting it up, and of keeping closely and constantly to it, all the rest of the world about them seem to be in a general conspiracy to prevent and forbid the thing, and they would find themselves for ever exposed to the intrusion of the vain, the idle, the pleasurable part of mankind, who will be masters of their evening hours; and, if possible, hurry them away along
with

Israel *and* England *compared*. 31

with them into the same scenes of midnight vanity and folly. And thus nature, which must have its time for needful refreshment, is forced to entrench on the morning hours of the day, which are almost lost in life with a great part of the nation, and make it a real difficulty, even to those who are truly desirous of appearing before their God on his own day, to save the hours appointed for morning worship in public, or obliges them to omit all private preparation for public worship, which is so necessary to give us a just sense of what we are going to do or enjoy, or even to ask of God his presence with us, and his blessing upon us. 'Tis the same also which has necessarily abridg'd the hours of our public worship, and rendered it impracticable for those, who live in the higher stations of life, to attend upon them on both parts of the day; and into how narrow a compass it will at last reduce them time only can discover.

2. BUT, alas! have we only to complain of the *decay* of religion?

IN a great part of the nation is there any religion at all remaining? or so much as the face and pretence of it? does not the very appearance of it in any persons very often expose them to contempt? and, instead of making a profession of the faith,
do

32 *Israel and England compared.*

do we not glory rather in the profession of infidelity ? And as God complains in the 43^d chapter of this very prophecy, *Thou hast been weary of me, O Israel* ; are not we also growing weary of christianity ? at the same time that, for the sake of certain civil advantages, we can submit to engage in the most peculiar and solemn ordinances of that very religion which we inwardly and heartily despise. A manifest violation of the majesty of conscience, and of the law or light of nature, the only rule we will allow that the great God has given, or can possibly be supposed to have given, to mankind ; and an instance of the greatest meanness of spirit : for hypocrisy is one of the basest and most despicable, as well as the most hateful vices.

INFIDELITY, indeed, might have something to say for itself, if it arose from the real want of evidence in a religion which we do not renounce, till after our sincerest and most diligent enquiries into the reasons of our faith. But when it is owing to a jest only on some mistaken passage in our bibles, to the company we keep, or to the levity of our own minds, and the reading only on one side of the question ; and especially to the fear of finding the truth and our duty, where we are utterly unwilling to find it ; whatever we may think of such
incre-

Israel *and* England compared. 33

incredulity, he that has given us all the necessary means of conviction, will judge of us as of those *who believe not the truth, because they have pleasure in unrighteousness, or falsehood*, according to the description the apostle gives of some in the 2 *Theff.* ii. 10, 12. And I persuade myself that if the most of infidels and sceptics would carefully examine themselves, they would find that their doubts and objections against the truth of the christian religion did not begin in the reasonings of their minds, but in the vices of their lives, or the indisposition of their hearts *to receive the truth in the love thereof*, or an impatience of restraint by the laws of christianity. *They make shipwreck of the faith*, because they had first made shipwreck of a good conscience. Therefore the bible is seldom or never read; and every book, or pamphlet, that shall call in question, or even expose, the doctrines of the bible, is read with eagerness, how plainly soever those doctrines are perverted, or the facts themselves recorded in the scriptures, designedly and maliciously misrepresented. But,

HOWEVER it be with the upper part of the world, or with men of leisure and reading, the body of the lower rank of persons among us, seem not to give themselves the trouble to have so much as a notion of religion,

34 *Israel and England compared.*

ligion, unless it be in their contempt and hatred of all those who make any profession of it, and especially any peculiar profession ; and, for this reason,

3. THEY have abandoned themselves to all manner of *immorality*, and, to the profaneness of oaths and curses, and violation of the sabbath. They add lewdness, drunkenness, perjury, revelling, riot, and even murder and violence, in every street of a city once fam'd for the good order, peace and security maintained in it, and where it has been observed^g, within our memory, to the honour of it, in distinction from other cities abroad, that we might walk without fear or danger from one end of it to another, any hour of the night itself. But how is the face of things quite chang'd in a few years ; and where it will end, and how far it will proceed, who can at present so much as conjecture ?

BUT it were endless to enlarge here ; neither will the little remainder of time allow it, which we have reserved for the third and last part of this discourse. I will only observe, that this is the nation once esteemed for a serious sense of religion, and, as appears by the journals of our sailors, that never sent their ships themselves on any considerable adventures abroad, without provision

^g See Mr. Shower's Reformation Sermon.

Israel *and* England *compared*. 35

vision for the worship of God among them, at sea as well as at land; and whose language foreigners thought it worth the while to learn, that they might partake themselves, or be able to communicate to others, the spirit of piety and devotion that breath'd in the writings of such a people. And now,

III. IF such have been the distinguishing privileges of such a nation and church, and we must own that God has given us thus all things *that pertain to life, or to godliness*; all we could reasonably ask of him; and all to so little purpose: if such a people, in such circumstances, are called upon by public authority, that is, by those who are the properest judges of the situation we are in, to keep a day of prayer and humiliation of ourselves, under a sense of our sins, or of our danger; what is it that God may justly expect from us, or what the behaviour that must needs become us?

I SHALL only consider it under two heads.

First, That we humble, and even greatly humble ourselves under the guilt of such a conduct.

Secondly, That we keep such a day with a sincere purpose and resolution of amendment. And,

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I. IT

36. *Israel and England compared.*

1. IT becomes us this day to humble, and even greatly to humble ourselves under the sense of our present conduct. Thus it was when all *Israel* appointed a day of fasting and humiliation; *Neb. ix. They confessed before the Lord, and humbled themselves, under a sense of the sins of their fathers, and their own sins. Our fathers, say they, dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and bearken'd not to thy commandments. And as to themselves, Thou art just, say they, in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly, our kings, our princes, our priests, and our fathers, ver. 3, 16, 33. So Daniel ix. 3---8. in words that are well worth the reading and considering upon this occasion. And let it be remembred that this of Daniel was a private and personal fast, though upon a public occasion. And I mention this, that I may observe, how proper soever it be upon such a day to confess before the Lord the sins of which we are guilty as a nation; if yet we deal sincerely with God, every one of us will lay his hand also upon his own breast, and enter into his own heart, and confess the errors of his own ways, and will ask himself what share of the national load of guilt each of us have reason to take to ourselves.*

2. BUT humiliation is in order to AMENDMENT.

Godly

Israel *and* England compared. 37

Godly sorrow, wherever it is truly found, *worketh repentance not repented.* Without this there is no sincere confession or true contrition. Joel ii. 12, 13. *Turn you to me, saith God, with all your heart, and with fasting and weeping. And rend your heart, and not your garment, and turn unto the Lord your God.* And to such a purpose, if to any good purpose, a fast is proclaimed. So it was in the fast we mentioned in *Nehemiah*, as we see at the close of the chapter, where that people *make a SURE covenant with God, and write it, and their princes, levites and priests seal to it, and Nehemiah himself, their governor, set his seal the first, and after these the rest of the people, chap. x. 1, 28. and bound themselves, in the most solemn and awful manner, to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord their God, ver. 29.* And the same we may observe in *Ezra x.*

THUS must we also resolve to do, at least, in the spirit of such examples. And when a public fast is proclaimed, whatever we really *do*, or *do not*, in the letter, yet we virtually covenant with God, and our kings, our princes, our priests, and all the people, are understood either to set, or not to set, their seals to it, according as they deal faithfully and sincerely, or falsely and

38 *Israel and England compared.*

deceitfully in the appointment and solemnizing of such a day.

AND, if we really deal thus faithfully and sincerely, what a change will it make in the spirit and conduct of this whole nation henceforward? and what hereupon may we not expect from that God before whom we have thus humbled ourselves, with sincerest repentance; and to whom we *return with all our hearts, and with all our souls?* For then *shall the Lord be jealous for this his land, and pity his people;* as it is said in *Joel ii. 18.* Then may we hope to hear glad tidings from our forces and our fleets abroad, and may expect that success and victory shall attend them. And without this we may expect the very reverse: defeat, disgrace and disappointment; and after all the vastest preparations, and the most towering hopes, to have that antient observation concerning the people of this island once more verified, that is, *to enterprize rashly, and come off miserably, in great undertakings.* And as to that God in whose presence we are assembled this day, if we do not thus humble ourselves, and resolve on a real and thorough reformation, in consequence of it, the very pretence of keeping such a day will be a new provocation, and instead of diverting the divine displeasure,

Israel *and* England compared. 39

sure, will only so much the more affront the eyes of his jealousy. *It will be iniquity even the solemn meeting*, as he saith in the first chapter of this prophecy, ver. 11---15. *Your new moons, and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: and when ye spread forth your hands, as we do on such days of fasting and prayer, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not bear.* What then? why, *Wash ye, make ye clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, &c.* ver. 16. Without this, tho' we should make many prayers, and not only observe yearly fasts as in the last war, or monthly, as in the former, or even weekly, as in the time of the distress of the protestants massacred in *France*, during the^h reign of *Queen Elizabeth*; yet all this would be understood only as a more solemn mockery of God, and a deeper hypocrisy.

AND

^h I have by me the form of prayer on this occasion, together with other forms of public prayer, from the beginning of the reign of *Queen Elizabeth* to the revolution, with the rasures, interpolations, and alterations, made in them from time to time, as they passed from one archbishop to another, down to archbishop *San-croft*, from a domestic of whose they came into my hands, and with them the speech of archbishop *Laud* in the star-chamber, occasioned by some alterations in them imputed to him, &c.

40 *Israel and England compared.*

AND now, what can I urge more properly with you in the *conclusion of this discourse*, than the awful considerations which God himself sets before this people, in the close of this affecting and instructing parable? Let us read ver. 4--9.

What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? wherefore when I expected it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now, go to, I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and break down the wall thereof, and I will lay it waste; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. Wo to them that lay house to house till there be no place [for more.] In mine ears saith the Lord of hosts, of a truth many houses shall be desolate; great and fair without inhabitant; that is, in other words, he will unpeople us, he will unchurch us.

WHAT a melancholly thing would it be, if, in such a vast collection of houses as is seen in this city, such, perhaps, as is hardly to be seen again in any other city in the world, if the different manner of building houses here and in an empire celebrated for the prodigious magnitude of their cities be considered, there should yet no people be found to inhabit them, and we should walk through unnumbered streets of perpetual solitude

Israel *and* England compared. 41

solitude and desolation, which would soon be the consequence of the loss of trade, which has raised it to such a stupendous size in the compass of little more than the age of one man, from one of the least of the capital cities of *Europe*. How melancholly, I say, when upon the ruin of this city would follow the poverty and depopulation of a land which does but plow and sow, and plant and feed innumerable herds and flocks, to maintain such endless numbers in a city which receives the product of remotest counties, and sends back in return the riches she has drawn together from all the ends of the earth! And, together with the general poverty of the land, how would the dignity of the kingdom sink by equal degrees, the lustre of its crown be tarnished, its royal navy lie unmann'd and rotting in our harbours, the majesty of it disappear from thenceforward, and its importance and influence abroad be no more the glory of the *English* nation, or the hope and support of the rest of the nations, that have been wont to turn their eyes towards this island, as their last or their only refuge, against the power of tyrants and oppressors.

AND yet, perhaps, still more melancholly would the face of things appear, if the numerous places of christian worship, such
a large

42 *Israel and England compared.*

a large addition to which has been thought necessary within the compass of a few years, equal to the whole number of parish-churches in the capital city of a neighbouring kingdom, should all lie in ruins, or the ways to them mourn, because none come, nor remain to come, to the solemn assemblies. And, especially if such a depopulation shou'd be owing to the power of some foreign invader, and the *children of our Zion* shall be carried into captivity, or be dispersed wherever they might hope for shelter, or to enjoy truth and a good conscience.

AND *what then would you do in the solemn day, and in the day of the feast of the Lord?* Hof. ix. 5. *You would then long, perhaps, for one of the days of the son of man, with this people, and not enjoy it.*

YOU may neglect such seasons now, your *desire is not to the Lord, nor to the memorials of his name.* But were you to be deprived of your sabbaths, were you to be debarr'd from the solemn assemblies, to be banished from the house and ordinances of God, and forbidden by a law to meet your God in this manner, or do it at your utmost peril; then, perhaps, your former sense of such mercies would revive, you would reflect with regret upon your present conduct; you would think of valuable opportunities slighted by you, and ordinances you did
did

Israel and England compared. 43

did not attend; and would persuade yourselves, it may be, that if God would but once more indulge you such advantages, yea but one such opportunity more, you would pray, you would hear, you would approach his table in another manner than ever you did.

WELL, is it not better to be delivered from the very occasion of such fruitless wishes, and vain promises, by a present value for sacred enjoyments, and improvement of them; and by such a truly religious conduct as shall prevent so dreadful a calamity?

O MAY this be the happy consequence of the appointment of such a day, and may we so behave in it, and after it, *that from this very day our God may bless us.*

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

PAGE 13. omit all between the crotchets. p. 24. dele *last*, or read *late*. p. 34. l. 6. r. *immorality*: and l. 8. a comma only after *sabbath*. ib. r. *they*. p. 40. l. 5. r. *instructive*. p. 42. l. 10. r. *should*.

Israel and England compared.

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